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MEDIA RELEASE

While Campbell tries to save the whales ... Abetz fails to protect deep sea ecosystems

Canberra: 19 June 2006

The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition today expressed disappointment that the Liberal-National Coalition Government did not support a Senate motion calling for short-term measures to protect the deep seas from the destructive fishing practice of bottom trawling until longer term arrangements for oceans governance are put in place.

“This government prides itself as a champion of the oceans, yet it is ignoring the plight of largely untouched and undiscovered vulnerable seamount ecosystems” said Lyn Goldsworthy, Australian representative of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition.

“There appears to be no logical, economic or environmental reason for such a stubborn opposition to short term protection measures while longer term regulations are being developed. Our fishing industry has contributed to the damage in the past, but only engages in high sea bottom trawling on very limited basis now”.

“The Government does not have a whole-of-Government position but yet seems happy to let the Minister for Fisheries, Senator Abetz to run the agenda on allowing deep sea destruction to continue” she said.

The Senate motion was put by Australian Greens Senator Siewert. The motion called for Australian Government support for interim measures to address the destructive impacts of high seas bottom trawling on deep sea ecosystems while long-term governance arrangements are put in place. The motion was defeated in the Senate by the Government despite having the support of the Australian Labor Party, the Greens and the Democrats. (A copy of the motion is attached).

On 11 October last year the Senate, with Government support, acknowledged the destructive impacts of high seas bottom trawling and the need for urgent action.

“Australia has been a leader on illegal fishing and whaling so it is very disappointing they will not provide leadership to protect the deep seas” said Ms Goldsworthy.

In November 2006 the United Nations General Assembly will consider specific recommendations to address the destructive impacts of high seas bottom trawling.

For further information contact:

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The Deep Sea Conservation Coalition is an alliance of over 50 international organizations, representing millions of people in countries around the world. It is calling for a moratorium on high seas bottom trawling until the nations of the world can establish strong management measures for deep-sea fisheries and protect biodiversity on the high seas.

Australian Members: Australian Conservation Foundation,
The Wilderness Society and Greenpeace Australia Pacific

Notice of Motion

Wednesday, 14 June 2006

I give notice that on the next day of sitting I shall move:

That the Senate

- a. Recognises that unregulated high seas bottom trawling is inconsistent with international law as recognised in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS);
- b. Notes the Australian Government's initiatives in developing long-term governance arrangements to address destructive fishing practices such as IUU fishing and high sea bottom trawling
- c. Calls on the Australian Government to report on its actions to inform a review of progress and future recommendations to address the destructive impacts on deep sea ecosystems, as requested by the United Nations, and which was to have been provided by May 1, 2006.
- d. Notes that these governance measures will take time to develop and implement and the need, therefore, for interim short-term measures -- such as a global moratorium on high seas bottom trawling.
- e. Notes that the United Nations General Assembly will consider a proposal for a global moratorium on high seas bottom trawling in October – November 2006.
- f. Calls on the Government to support interim measures to address the destructive impacts of bottom trawling on deep sea ecosystems while long-term governance measures are put in place.